National Repertoires of Moral Values

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Abstract. The aim in this article is to widen the understanding of the significance of morality in the Norwegian social formation by comparing it with the French and the American case. After the introductory discussion of the new sociology of morality, previous findings from a study of the Norwegian middle class are reported. A short presentation of *republicanism* in France and *Americanism* in USA is followed by an analysis of the cultural and structural peculiarities of the Norwegian case, arguing that the content of the Norwegian middle class morality should be seen in light of the *egalitarian tradition*. Finally, by way of comparison the article points to possible ways the different configuration of values might be transferred institutionally.
Keywords: Middle class, cultural sociology, morality, Lamont, comparisons, Norway

INTRODUCTION: THE NEW SOCIOLOGY OF MORALITY

Through the works of the founding fathers in sociology Marx, Durkheim and Weber, the discipline was central in the development of an understanding of the nature of human moral systems. Contrary to cognate fields of research in psychology and biology the sociological engagement in the study of morality has waned over the past half-century. Recent research show that incidences of the terms "moral", "morals" and "morality" in *American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* reached a peak around 1950 and the use of the terms have declined by more than a half since the mid-century peak (Hitlin and

Vaisey, 2013). Similar observations about the declined interest in morality has been made in European sociology (Lamont and Thévenot, 2000; Sayer, 2005). What caused the decline? Hitlin and Vaisey argue that an important explanation is the assimilation of the moral domain in the theory of Parsons under the heading of "moral norms" and "moral consensus". It is well known in the history of sociology that Parsons's theory was criticized for being consensus oriented and the conception of the moral came to be associated with what Garfinkel called "cultural dope" and "over-socialized persons". Thus, in the critique of Parsons functionalistic perspective, morality became synonymous with conformity. The influence of Weber, Marx and Nietzsche and the emergent focus on conflict and stratification has generated moral scepticism and relativism, and sociologists have for long ignored moral issues or interpreted morality as merely concealing other more "real interests" (Lamont and Thévenot, 2000: 6). An increased use of statistical methods may have contributed to the decline, as moral values are more difficult to measure than age, educational level, income (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2013).

In the very recent years, however, morality has once again been understood as a phenomenon interesting for sociological studies. The new sociology of morality becomes evident by two sets of demarcations. Firstly it demarcates itself from the old sociology of morality (durkheimian and parsonian) which argued that consensus would occur when moral values were internalized universally. While the old functionalistic approach thus considered morality as a property of entire societies, the new sociology of morality discusses differences in morality between classes, groups, nations etc. Secondly, it demarcates itself from the moral psychology and neuroscience (Abend, 2011; Abend, 2012). In this connection, Abend (2011) suggests to make a distinction between thin and thick understanding of morality. Thin concepts of morality are engaged in the understanding of specific acts in concrete settings (often hypothetical) settings (often constructed in psychological experiments), while sociologist and historians more often engage in the understanding of moral identities and practices "on longer time scale and as they become part of social institutions" (Abend, 2011; Hitling and Vaisey, 2013: 55).

The reliance on thick descriptions of morality has made an effect on cultural sociology in general. Studies reveal differences in morality between societies and groups and varieties of moral classifications and typologies are indeed key components in the renewal of cultural sociology. Morality is analyzed as an embedded part of the cultures of

societies and sociologists compare moral identities and practices between groups, classes and nations. Furthermore, cultural sociology deals historically with the social processes that create and sustain different group's conceptions of morality and the research offers new interpretations of how the morality of different actors in participate in the construction of institutions.[1] In line with the new focus on morality in cultural sociology the aim in this article is to focus on the content of morality and its importance in the Norwegian social formation. We have tried to nuance this picture of the middle class through an analysis of the Norwegians middle class' relations to humanistic high-culture, status, education, class-belonging, scientific knowledge and morality (Sakslind, 2006; Sakslind, 2007; Skarpenes, 2007; Skarpenes and Sakslind, 2008; Skarpenes and Sakslind, 2010; Hestholm and Sakslind, 2016; Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014), and by comparing the Norwegian case with the middle class in Germany, France, Britain and USA we have argued that the development of a theory of class needs to be sensitive to differences in social and national contexts. Building on our previous study on morality (Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014) the analysis of morality is complemented here by a change in focus. By elaborating the comparative dimension in the discussion of morality in a close dialogue with Lamont, the peculiarities of the Norwegian case appear even clearer.

Thus, the article starts out presenting Lamont's findings regarding the content of the moral repertoires used by the American and the French middle class. Then it puts forward our findings on the morality of the Norwegian middle class. In order to explain why the content of moral (and other) repertoires varies cross-nationally, Lamont engages cultural and structural features of the various societies. After a short presentation Lamont's discussion of the French and the American case, we point cultural and structural peculiarities in the Norwegian history. Finally, by use of comparison we discuss possible ways such a configuration of values are transferred through different institutions.

DATA AND RESEARCH METHODS

Firstly we present the methodology, sample and data collection in our study of the Norwegian middle class.The discussion in this article is basically theoretical and historical, still it is based on data collected in a larger project on the Norwegian middle class (Sakslind, 2006; Sakslind, 2007; Skarpenes, 2007; Skarpenes and Sakslind, 2008; Skarpenes and

Sakslind, 2010; Hestholm and Sakslind, 2016; Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014). Not until the last 20 or so years have sociologists, especially in Britain, engaged in broader empirical studies of the middle class. Sciulli and Halley (2009: 202-203) argue that instead of studying professions in particular, continental sociologists typically study much broader socio-economic and socio-cultural formations, namely middle classes, but the middle class has largely been overlooked in Norwegian social science[2], a neglect that resembles the situation in the other Scandinavian countries. We have chosen to study academically educated persons because they are important actors within the new middle class. Education was the major institution for shaping the (new) middle classes I n the twentieth century, and the category of academically educated persons we study are considered an important segment within the middle class in most theory. Conventionally, these expert groups are classified as belonging to the *upper-middle class* (Lamont, 1994) or to the German *Bildungsbürgertum* (Kocka, 1995: 16). In addition, there are many interesting paradoxes related to the educated groups in Norway – paradoxes related to specific historical structures (Sakslind, 2007).

We have used an open, "grounded" approach in which empirical data functions as a point of departure for developing hypotheses and concepts. Also with this approach, we methodologically try to avoid aprioristic notions about a middle class culture. We have been influenced by Michèle Lamont's methodological design in her study of the French and American middle class (1994). In the study, we have conducted 112 in-depth interviews with highly educated men and women in public and private sectors in three cities (Oslo, Bergen and Kristiansand) half of the interviews are from Oslo (the capital).[3] Contrary to Lamont, we have included both sexes in our study, and we have taken a special interest in focusing on the dimension of academic knowledge. The average educational level of our interviewees is higher when compared to Lamont's interviewees. Due to our interest in the analysis of academic knowledge and epistemology (Sakslind, 2007; Hestholm and Sakslind, 2016), half of the persons interviewed in public sector have been employed at universities, university colleges and research institutes. In private sector we have interviewed both employees and self-employed. We have not focused on the level of senior executives, although the sample studied contained individuals in leadership and management.

Table 1. Distribution of sample according to academic discipline, region and societal sector

	Social sciences and the humanities		Economy and Law		Medicine and health		Natural sciences, technology and graduate engineer		
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	N
Oslo	8	9	6	8	8	6	7	5	57
Bergen	5	5	5	4	5	3	4	5	36
Kristiansand	4			6	3			6	19
N	17	14	11	18	16	9	11	16	112

The primarily criterion for selection is higher education on at least the level of *hovedfag* (a 6 years degree) or diplomas from the so called scientific university colleges.[4] We covered four "epistemic cultures": natural science and technology (N/T), medicine, health and psychology (M/H), social science and the humanities (S/H), and economy and law (E/L).[5] Being thematically ordered, the interviews focused on education, work, class, knowledge, the role of being an expert, family, leisure time and cultural preferences. In the interviews we brought up themes and situations we thought would invoke the informant's interest, giving them the opportunity to clearly formulate what they value and what they did not value, how they judge people, knowledge, education, culture etc., and how they rank, criticise and legitimate. We asked them what kind of people they felt superior or inferior to, what they emphasised in the upbringing of their children, what characterised their friends, what kind of people they liked and disliked, what they did in their leisure time and how the leisure time activities differed from others.

THE MORALITY OF THE MIDDLE CLASS IN USA, FRANCE AND NORWAY

What is important here is Lamont's discussion of morality and the middle class. In order to compare Norway with USA and France we need give a short resume of morality as it appears in Lamont's data on the French and American middle class (Lamont, 1994: 24-62).

In USA: Puritan moralism and friendliness

In interviews, her American informants use *the phony* as a figure of speech to describe a type of person they strongly dislike. A phony is characterized by insincerity and dishonesty; this is the kind of person who asks how you and your family are doing, but in reality could not care less. American informants also dislike *social climbers*, those who are overly zealous in trying to realize their ambitions; they manipulate their environment and are excessively aggressive. A third disparaging label is the *low-morals type*. Examples of low moral types: those who break the 10 Commandments, e. g., liars, philanders and law-breakers, etc., and those who shirk work or duty. According to Lamont, Americans link morality closely to a Judeo-Christian definition, and compared to the French, Americans seem less inclined to consider somenone's political position as indicative of their morality. It is also the case that *altruism*, *volunteering and charities* are highly valued. In the work place, friendliness, the avoidance of conflict, team-orientation and flexibility (in contrast to personal integrity in France), being easy-going, having a sense of humour and putting others at ease are all important traits. Work ethics and competence are thus closely related to honesty and moral purity. It is important to be ambitious and laziness is seen as a very negative quality. American interviewees also emphasize competition. In sum, according to Lamont, we can call this a form of *puritan moralism*.

In France: Social moralism and intellectual honesty

To be sure, French informants are also sceptical of social climbers and dishonest people. Yet the French middle class, such as it manifests itself in Lamont's material, is sceptical of the Judeo-Christian understanding of honesty (often perceived as *petite bourgeois*). The French middle class has antipathy towards *intellectual dishonesty*. It is a matter of being true to oneself and one's ideas, regardless of what others think. Honour and personal integrity are crucial; one must not "lick other people's boots". *Salaud* is another category the French middle class representatives mobilize when drawing moral boundaries. This category contains people who are intellectually dishonest and willing to sacrifice other people's interests by repressing them politically.

A *salaud* lacks class solidarity, betrays childhood classmates, underpays employees, is a strike-breaker, and abandons friends if it is personally

advantageous to do so. More often than not, the French middle class deem political positions as revealing moral character (and good moral character is often associated with left-wing politics). Volunteering and charities are not important. The question of how to distribute wealth is a collective responsibility and must be dealt with by the state (social morality). What the French admire is the *honnête homme*. This Rousseauesque figure is frequently found in Balzac's novels and is often mentioned by the French middle class male informants. This is an urban gentleman with good manners, who knows how to enjoy life. The mobilized values are rooted in Catholic humanism as well as socialistic humanism (this especially pertains to interviewees employed in the public sector), and morality is largely determined according to whether or not a person participates in some sort of economic or political suppression of others. Lamont summarizes this by saying that a *social moralism* exists in France.

In Norway: Christian-humanism and social-responsibility

In a previous article we argued that moral boundaries emerge most strongly in Norway (Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014). We followed Lamont's approach asking the interviewees who they were fascinated by/ admired/ looked up to/ had respect for/ had sympathy for and who they disrespected, did not want to be associated with or lacked sympathy for (we varied the way the question was asked). Answers to the two questions show that in most cases, the people mentioned represented moral values. Even if we cannot rule out that such a pattern of response is influenced by how the questions were phrased, we attach significance to the fact that as many as 75% of our interviewees were primarily concerned with morality in their answers.[6] Two different moral repertoires were mobilized when informants answered the afore-mentioned questions. A short repetition our findings (see Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014) is needed. We can speak of a "Christian-humanist moral" repertoire[7] and a second repertoire geared more towards "social responsibility."

In the latter we found that values such as equality and solidarity were important for the middle class. The representatives for middle class in Norway admired the "everyday hero", industrial workers, nurses aids, those who act fairly, idealists in practice, tolerant people, those who

work enthusiastically on the local level, reliable and trustworthy people, those who take political responsibility in the third world (peace, the environment, human rights and poverty), people who work for unity in the world. There was often resistance towards people who are self-centred and focused on their career – in short, those who do not take the community into consideration. They found wages to be adequate, taxes were OK, and it looks like there is relatively large support for the "social contract" in the social-democratic welfare state (and its institutions). The hero in this moral repertoire is *the socially responsible citizen*. The egoist is least valued. In addition, and perhaps just as importantly, we found how significant Christian-humanistic values are for the middle class (altruism, honesty, tolerance, respect of others, brotherly love, etc). Some examples of what they admired: people who care for their neighbour when he or she is suffering, those who go to Africa and start schools for orphans, those who care about others, those who sacrifice themselves for others, those who care for the sick and weak, altruists, people who really notice others, kind people, respectful people, idealists, everyone involved in not-for-profit organizations, moral people, empathetic people, honest people and warm hearted people.

Also mentioned are idealistic organizations such as the Salvation Army, home mission societies, the Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières, etc. Particular individuals who are mentioned include Mother Theresa, Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela.

Furthermore, the middle class representatives state that they dislike racists, the intolerant, the dishonest, those who are judgemental etc. This reflects a value hierarchy culturally rooted in Christianity and humanism and it is probably also rooted in the family, which is very important for this group. The hero in the Christian-humanist moral repertoire resembles *the Good Samaritan*. The judgemental person is the least valued. The findings suggest that we witness a culture of morality within the middle class in Norway (Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014).[8]

CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS TO EXPLAIN DIFFERENCES IN NATIONAL PATTERNS

Lamont points to variations in national conditions in how boundary patterns might translate into domination (see Kokca, 1995; Siegrist, 2002 and Savage, 2000, 2002) for national peculiarities in Germany and Britain, respectively). When scrutinizing the culture of the upper-middle

class in France and USA with a grounded and open approach, Lamont avoided preconceived categories of classed dynamics of cultural capital. The discovery of the moral boundaries epitomized the methodological fruitfulness of the approach, but more substantively, the introduction of morality reinforces a demand for rethinking the role of class in different societal formation following national *sonderwege*.

Lamont argues that Bourdieu greatly underestimates the importance of moral boundaries. Indeed Bourdieu treats morality as the underprivileged's substitute for high-culture and refinement (Bourdieu, 2002: 353). Morality is not more than a residual category for those without any other alternative. Only people lacking money, culture and connections resort to morality (Bourdieu, 2002: 333) and, still according to Bourdieu, when the *bourgeoise* judge art through aesthetic categories the working class people "refer, often explicitly, to norms of morality or agreeableness in all their judgements" (Bourdieu, 2002: 41; see also Lamont, 1994: 184, 277).[9] We support Lamont when she argues that in the theory of Bourdieu the most morally inclined are losers who make a virtue of necessity.

Bourdieu does not allow morality any autonomy. Morality is always subordinated to other principles of hierarchization (Lamont, 1994: 184). But Lamont's study of the middle class in USA and France shows the opposite: moral obligations are often valued as a goal in itself (Lamont, 1994: 184). Thus, to avoid a structuralist perspective were cultural differences automatically translate into dominance (normal and abnormal, sane and insane, legitimate culture and illegitimate culture etc.) since the cultural constructions are defined in opposition to each other, Lamont launches a more historical and context sensitive approach.

In USA and France: Americanism and republicanism

When discussing variations in the national boundary patterns, Lamont connects these patterns with cultural and structural factors in France and USA. In the USA, pragmatism (i.e. "see if it works" ideology), populism (a tradition for different kinds of "grassroots" protests against the rich) and "Americanism" are important cultural features. "Plain people" metamorphose into heroes, a phenomenon impacting the view of intellectuals and literary culture. "Americanism" is about realizing goals, achieving something, and individualism is especially linked to material

success (Lamont, 1994: 137). France's counterpart to "Americanism" can be found in its republican values. These include ideals such as equality, universalism and national unity, and function as a bulwark against particularism based on locality. Another such inheritance from the Enlightenment is Cartesian rationality and its importance for political order (Lamont, 1994: 137).

These culturally embedded historical national boundaries are also communicated and transferred through different institutions (educational system, mass media, cultural institutions and intellectual elites) (Lamont, 1994: 136-144).[10] According to Lamont her findings not only explain national differences in boundary patterns but might also point to more substantive issues, such as greater materialism in USA and greater importance of high culture in France. Differences in national cultural orientations, she states, are accounted for by the combination of structural and cultural societal features. Hence, the importance of high culture in France can only be explained by a large welfare state that diminish the impact of marked mechanisms, the centralized educational system, a strong subculture of French intellectuals, greater ethnic and racial homogeneity and a strong aristocratic tradition. In USA the importance of socio-economic boundaries is explained by a weak Welfare State, high geographical mobility, privately owned mass media, low influence of intellectuals and a local school system transferring the ideas of Americanism (individualism and achievement) (Lamont, 1994: 148-149, see also Linko and Lonkila, 1994).

In Norway: Egalitarianism

In line with Lamont's reasoning we argue that an interpretation of the middle class culture of morality must be connected with the cultural and structural features of the Norwegian society. Obvious analytical challenges loom when trying to explain historically the contents and significance of moral repertoires in the Norwegian society. Still, bringing cultural traits and institutional development specific for the Norwegian *Sonderweg* into the analysis offer a possibility to formulate historical informed hypothesis about both the content of the middle class morality in Norway and why it seems so important without slipping into functionalistic explanations.

A Norwegian parallel to the *Americanism* and *Republicanism* could be *Egalitarianism*. An understanding of the term "Egalitarianism" is to be

found in the history of Norwegian modernity. Norway had no nobility or aristocracy, it had no big cities, not a financially strong bourgeoisie i.e. the capitalist class was weak (instead there were many small units, and the process of modernization has been characterized by a "democratic capitalism" (Sejersted, 1993). Local traditions and Communitarianism grew in importance in the late nineteenth century and made a huge impact on school curriculum (Lauglo, 1995). Lauglo uses the concept "populist" when describing these values, which confronted values of the cultural and political elite. Compared with other western nations the high-culture institutions were established late in Norway (Danielsen, 1998). In addition, the rural countercultural movements were strong. Another observer of the Nordic societies, Stephen Graubard states:

> The Nordic states, in one way or other, demonstrating a high regard for efficiency and equality, perhaps, also in Tocqueville's words, showing a "true passion for equality," have managed to institutionalize state procedures that guarantee the basic physical needs of their citizens, young and old. (Graubard, 1988: 8)[11]

It seems possible that the content of the moral repertoires we have described above could have emerged from this egalitarian tradition. In addition, the complex of values might be related to a specific secularized Lutheranism.[12] The Lutheran state churches were established in the 16th century and the orthodoxy and state orientation provoked pietism and revivalism. It meant individualization and dehierarchization of religion and the strong Norwegian "low-church" movements became a popular front against the Norwegian State Lutheran Church's institutional hegemony. Nina Witozcek argues that countless religious controversies and movements within both established and Pietist forms of Protestantism contributed to the civic *Bildung* ("education") and also the cultural elites were deeply committed Christians (Witoszek, 1998: 77). Norwegian (and Scandinavian) individualism was contaminated by Christianity and the Christian ethos imposed a breaking mechanism of nationalism. Similarly, Sørensen and Stråth argue that social democracy can be considered a transformation of Lutherianism, political culture, popular movements and social liberalism and the different ways the ideals of freedom and equality have been handled (Sørensen and Stråth, 1997: 5).

Even more concrete are those claiming that the Nordic model (or the social democratic welfare states) represents a secularized Lutheranism (Thorkildsen, 1997: 159). The caring ethic of Christianity promoted by

the Lutheran state church and the popular movement was cultivated by the labor movement and might have paved the way for the Norwegian social democratic welfare state project. This short report on central discussions and thesis in the cultural construction of Norway, enable us with a historic foundation of the content of the Norwegian middle class culture of morality.

Thus, we add to the picture of USA and France drawn by Lamont, by suggesting that moral orientations seem to emerge from an egalitarian tradition and the secularization of Lutheranism in the Norwegian case.

NATIONAL VALUE PATTERNS TRANSFERRED THROUGH DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS: USA, FRANCE AND NORWAY

Lamont gives a rather detailed report on how culturally embedded national boundaries are transferred through different institutions (educational system, mass media, cultural institutions and intellectual elites) (Lamont, 1994: 136-144). We need to be brief in our comparison.

The educational system:
France is marked by an educational system that is more explicitly elitist (Mangset, 2004) than in Norway (or the USA). It is administratively centralized and schools are largely government owned and operated. Everything from teachers' salaries to required reading lists are determined by a central office (Lamont, 1994: 140). Higher education in France is partly a matter of creating the meritocratic elite built on the principle of everyone having an equal chance (Mangset, 2004). Elite constructions take part also in terms of culture (authors, artists) (Lamont, 1994: 140). The school system attributes great importance of school exams and entrance exams in order to ensure the legitimization of the elite.

In the USA, by contrast, there is no generally accepted conception of elite culture such as we find in France. In the USA everything from curriculum to teachers' salaries is determined by local school authorities, and more emphasis is on special expertise and technical knowledge than in France (Lamont, 1994: 140-141). In Norway the educational system is centrally administered. Salaries and lesson plans are determined by a central office, but allowances are also made for local differences with regard to choice of subject, curriculum, etc.

Further, the Norwegian system is less meritocratic than the French system and theoretical knowledge has held an ambiguous position (Lauglo, 1995). Furthermore, the Norwegian *allmueskolen* (the first government-operated schools, begun ca. 1741) was originally designed to teach Christianity, thus it was called the 'daughter of the Church' (Helsvig, 2003:1). Although state-organized religion has now lost much of its jurisdiction through the secularization processes, it has developed into a tool for integration (Helsvig, 2003), that is, several of its values presumably are perpetuated in the public school system.

Cultural institutions:
These are government financed and very important in France. Culture has a dominant place in the society and the importance of spreading it beyond France's borders is also reflected in the Foreign Office's budget. In the USA, cultural institutions are more exposed to market pressure and artists lack the government grants their French colleagues enjoy (Lamont, 1994: 141-142). Compared to France, Norwegian cultural institutions have a short history (Danielsen, 1998). The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is more geared towards peace negotiation and overseas development than cultural visions.

Mass media and the public:
Compared with France American intellectuals and authors enjoy less recognition. A large percentage of the French intelligentsia have attended the same schools. In the USA, technocratic culture has made a huge impact and people are generally more egalitarian. In Norwegian society, by contrast, intellectuals and other elites seem to have played a more diffuse role than in France. Henningsen and Vike (1999) point out that the modernization process in many Western countries was impacted by the worldview of its elites. In Norway these elites seem to have been influenced by and obliged to serve populist codes and interests. Political movements whose bases are in the hinterland and amongst lower social classes have had great success throughout Norwegian history (Vike et al., 2001). Based on his comparative studies of political elites, Daloz (2007) points out that in the Nordic countries, it is important to appear "normal" and not stress differences between oneself and others. A study of Norwegian elite athletes (Henningsen, 2001) also corroborates the point, showing how important it is to understand the ideology of equality

and to cultivate a popular manner. As with France, the Norwegian state had a monopoly on television and radio for many years, and broadcasts in both France and Norway have been characterized by a variety of cultural expressions. Television and radio in the USA have a longer commercial history.

When comparing Norway with France, Norway's less pronounced and less institutionalized elite culture has perhaps caused commercialization to gain more clearly populistic features. Finally, one additional phenomenon stands out as particularly important in Norwegian society, namely the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize (perhaps also the Rafto Prize). It is clear that the attention these prizes receive from mass media (also international media) helps create conceptions and values which have, in turn, affected the Norwegian population's self -image.

Public versus private sector:
The public sector in France extends over a larger area of life than does its American counterpart. This means fewer French people worry about money, since education, culture, health care and social welfare programs are covered largely by the public purse. Many of the collective benefits that are paid for through taxation in France are only available to the individuals who can afford them in the USA. For this reason it is not uncommon for Americans to conceive of success in terms of money (Lamont, 1994: 144-145). Just as in France, so also in Norway – the welfare state takes responsibility for providing for many of these needs. It is also important that class structure is more stable in France than in the USA. There is therefore less possibility for social mobility, which can cause the middleclass to use less time on reflecting over success and class change than in the USA. Even if the gap between the ten percent richest and the rest is getting wider, one could say that the differences between the classes are less in Norway than in many comparable countries, and that the Norwegian middleclass representatives therefore also to a lesser extent use their reflective activity to evaluate and ponder over different ways of achieving economic success and elevating status. This must be understood on the basis of the so-called Nordic model, which can be summarized as follows (Barth et al., 2003): Under the banner of *Arbeid til alle* ("Work for Everyone!"), the intention behind labour-related politics has been to achieve a low level of unemployment (Barth et al., 2003: 18).

One consequence of centralized salary negotiations was a gradual process of 'salary flattening', which over time generated the most

egalitarian salary distribution in the capitalist world (Barth et al. 2003: 19). The model has been socially and economically profitable, and caused the workforce to seek jobs with companies managing to comply with whatever tariffs are applicable at any particular time. In this system of collective bargaining, the industries that are subject to competition have negotiated first, thus determining salary frameworks. Unemployment has been low and centralized salary negotiations have caused labour unions to collaborate across occupational boundaries, in order to avoid rising prices and unemployment (Barth et al., 2003: 52).

In addition, the Nordic model has developed a good welfare system. Schools and universities have for the most part not charged tuition, and along with students' access to relatively good stipends and loans, this has helped more groups of people gain access to higher education. A good health sector and solid social services have created good conditions for treating illness, caring for the elderly and helping the unemployed. It has been claimed that the welfare state has been a bulwark of the social contrast and has functioned as a kind of insurance for what John Rawls calls "the veil of ignorance" (Barth et al., 2003: 132). A large welfare state both legitimates and is part of the cause for the *relatively small* differences in salaries in Norway.[13] The large welfare state, our material suggests, still enjoys great legitimacy. Perhaps there is also a shared experience amongst the population of well-being.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of modern society can be seen as waves of modernization offensives with the educated middle class in key roles for industrialization, creation of infrastructure and in the building of institutions for science, technology, education, etc. In these roles, representatives of the middle class carried the modern expert, meritocratic and individualistic culture (Wagner, 1994). In Norway the modernization process was accompanied by the culture of morality (altruism and equality) which left its mark on the middle class and the institutions this class contributed in the development of. Historically, in France, middle class groups have developed forms of collective organisations that cut across the boundaries between occupations, professions, hierarchies and social sectors (Boltanski, 1984). The professions in the USA have also, historically developed a collective identity. This, however, is on the verge of disintegrating. We can

identify a transition from "social trustee professionalism" to "expert professionalism" (Brint, 1994).

According to his thesis, a sense of affiliation existed between the different, yet collectively anchored, professions, its wellspring being an idea about how the professions, through collaboration, could use their knowledge for the good of society (they would not pursue egotistical professional interests). This identity has weakened insofar as the market's supply-and-demand logic has now become dominant in the USA. Middle class groups in Norway, however, did not develop a strong collective identity as a "separate, distinct class". Neither are there many traces of this sort of distinctive class identity when interviewees tell about how they experience themselves as practitioners of professions. Although our material reveals certain individuals who discuss their expert knowledge as sellable in a marketplace (several describe how neoliberal mechanisms influence their professional practice), market logic, it seems, has not impacted their identity in the same way and to the same extent as Brint finds in the USA.

If the process of modernization in Norway can be viewed as a huge collective project – *a class compromise* – influenced by the culture of egalitarianism, perhaps also the situation today can be interpreted to mean that the middle class representatives have great faith in the way Norwegian society is organized and differentiated, its division of labour functions as far as they can see; they exercise great trust in and collective support for the idea that *if* everyone does their job well *then* the society will be just and integrated (organic solidarity).

Said differently, perhaps members of the middle class deem it somewhat immoral to evaluate their own jobs and occupations too highly (a traditional hierarchical logic), and therefore perhaps also find it difficult to identify strongly *only* with other highly educated people. This argument seems plausible given our observations, outlined above (and elsewhere) that a moral repertoire of evaluation are culturally embedded in Norwegian society.[14] Norway is a society where the majority of the inhabitants do not (yet?) have to feel economically insecure on whether they can afford school fees and health insurance for their children (as in USA). Norway is also a society where the inhabitants do not have to face an extremely hierarchical and elitist educational system (as in France). Maybe such a social formation will look elsewhere for prestige, and the anti-hierarchical character of morality fit the Norwegian (or the Nordic) egalitarianism.[15]

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Notes

[1] The return of the moral in American sociology is not only associated with Robert Bellah et. al.'s *Habits of the Heart* (1996), Lamont's cultural studies of class (1994; 2000) and Jeffrey Alexander's Strong Program in Cultural Sociology (Alexander and Smith, 2003), but in the recently published *Handbook of the Sociology of Morality* more than 40 sociologists (mainly Americans) contribute with different theoretical positions and empirical focus' (Hitlin and Vaisey, 2010; see also Lamont, 2010). In Europe the French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot outline in their highly influential book *De la justification* (1991; engl. transl. 2006) a program in sociology that studies actors' own forms of criticism and justification, and morality has indeed been a central theme for their Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Moral in Paris. Through comparative studies, Michèle Lamont and Laurent Thévenot have shown that practices of appreciation, judging worth and apportioning criticism have patterns that follow national cultural repertoires of evaluation (Lamont and Thévenot, 2000: 8-9). Sayer (2005) analyses the moral dimension of class by focusing on how people experience good and bad behaviour in Britain. Svallfors (2006) analyses class cleavages in social attitudes in Sweden, Britain, USA and Germany.

[2] With some exceptions (Sakslind, 1984; 2006; 2007), (Myhre, 1994), (Barth et al., 2003), (Ericsson et al., 2004). For an early attempt to analyse the Finnish middle class (see Roos and Rahkonen, 1985).

[3] Being the second largest city, Bergen represents a "remote city culture" and Kristiansand is a smaller city with a university (used to be a university college).

[4] A few had a master degree. As part of the Bologna-process the system with bachelor – and master degrees replaced the Norwegian system with "cand. mag." and "hovedfag" degrees.

[5] In addition to these criteria (sector, gender, location and epistemic culture) we wanted to spread the interviewees on different subject (within the epistemic cultures) and on different occupations and positions. Accordingly, the selection is strategic, based on these theoretical and analytical criteria. The sample's distribution on sex and sector match Statistics Norway 2003 numbers about women and men in academic professions and occupations in public and private sector. After following the mentioned criteria, we picked interviewees from address lists found on internet and yellow pages. Respondents were not drawn randomly from a predefined "universe", but the selection of for instance a male social scientist at the University of Bergen was random in the sense that the selection did not follow any beforehand defined guidelines. The youngest interviewed in the sample was 27 years old, and the oldest was 65. The average was 45. Approximately 42 % of interviewees had a father with higher education. The interviews lasted between 1 and 3 hours.

[6] To avoid such reductionism we have made use of a cultural approach associated with the works of Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot and Michèle Lamont. Having said this, one cannot rule out the possibility that interviewees would have said something else in a different setting. This is a methodological problem (control effect) which cannot be ignored (neither in this, nor in any other sociological study).

[7] Ole Riis has argued that a new type of privatized religion have emerged in the Nordic countries. He gives this religion the label Protestant Humanism, and he argues that it "has a vital role in the legitimation of the modern structuration of societies, such as the Nordic ones" (Riis, 1989: 137). There is a close affinity between his and our argument.
[8] Since the publication of *De la justification* in 1991, where Boltanski and Thévenot developed the regime of justification, they and their companions have developed a whole string of different regimes of actions (Boltanski, 1999; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Dodier, 1993; Thévenot, 2001; Wagner, 1999). Maybe the combination of altruism and equality comprise a specific pragmatic regime of moral action.
[9] Unlike Bourdieu, our findings suggest that the middle class often judge cultural artefact through moral categories (Skarpenes, 2007).
[10] Lamont explains the boundary patters by referring to "remote environmental conditions" (public and non-profit sector, stratification system, geographical mobility) and to "proximate environmental factors" (gender, ethnicity, age, class, taste etc.), but these concepts of remote and proximate environmental conditions are bit vague.
[11] Dahl (1988) argue that in spite of the distribution of goods, wealth and so forth being more equal in Nordic countries than elsewhere in Western Europe, citizens nevertheless remain dissatisfied. This shows how entrenched the egalitarian conception of justice is in the Nordic value systems.
[12] We have discussed the importance of secularized Lutheranism in detail in a previous article (Sakslind and Skarpenes, 2014).
[13] Christensen et al. (2006) show that for 90% of the population, income distribution were stable from 1993 to 2004. What has happened, however, also in Norway, is that the wealthiest 10 % of the population are becoming increasingly more wealthy (Christensen et al., 2006).
[14] Hellevik points out that the probability for having an idealistic orientation in life increases with higher education (Hellevik, 2003: 33).
[15] See also Tvedt, 2003.

Acknowledgements. This article is published as part of the project "Knowledge and Culture in the Upper-Middle Class in Norway" funded by The Research Council of Norway (2004-2008). The project group was comprised of Roger Hestholm and Ove Skarpenes and lead by Rune Sakslind.